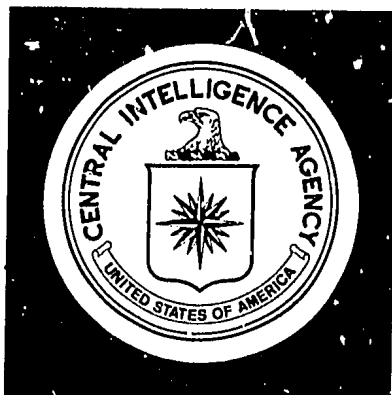


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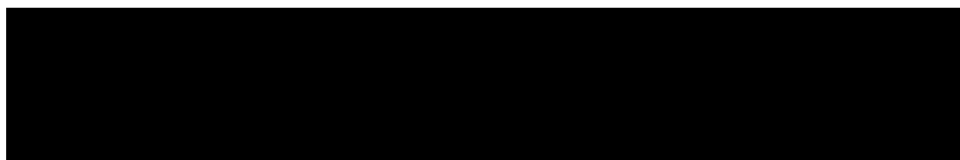
Key Italian Communist Leaders / Jun 75

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Key Italian Communist Leaders

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June 1975

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PREFACE

Enrico Berlinguer, a young, hard-working and skillful party craftsman, became secretary general of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in 1972. Under his leadership, the PCI has made substantial progress toward establishing its image as a serious and responsible party concerned with the country's social and economic problems. The PCI claims 1,657,000 members; it is the largest nonruling Communist party in the world and, after the Christian Democrats (DC), the second largest party in Italy. In the Italian legislature, as a result of elections held in 1972, the PCI controls 28.4 percent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 27.2 percent of those in the Senate. The DC controls 38.8 and 38.1 percent, respectively, in the two bodies.

The atmosphere of recurrent economic and political crisis—marked by labor unrest, disunity and factionalism among the government coalition parties and a center-left regime that has failed to implement long-promised reforms—prompted Berlinguer to announce at the 13th PCI National Congress in 1972 that the time had come “to assume our responsibilities” and to “give a new direction to the country.”

Berlinguer claims that the PCI's present campaign for an active role in tackling Italy's manifold problems is based on the political legacy of the late Palmiro Togliatti. It was Togliatti who set the PCI on a course of opportunistic adaptation to national realities and who abandoned revolutionary violence in favor of elective politics within the framework of constitutional pluralism. Togliatti often expressed the wistful hope that the PCI would someday “enter the field of government.” Luigi Longo, Togliatti's successor who moved up to the party's presidency when Berlinguer became secretary general in 1972, has often referred to the PCI as “*un partito di governo*” (a party of government). Berlinguer believes that a leftist majority can never govern Italy because of strong opposition from the center and the right. In his own words only a coalition of the center and the Communists would have the “force and authority” to deal with Italy's problems.

In the fall of 1973, in a highly publicized article in *Rinascita* (Rebirth), the PCI theoretical journal, Berlinguer proposed that the DC join the PCI in a “historic compromise” to solve the political and social problems that beset the country. During its 14th National Congress, held in Rome during 18-23 March 1975, the PCI endorsed the objectives of the historic compromise in general. Differences of opinion emerged during the congress, however, particularly with respect to the timing and the terms of the proposed alliance. The resolution approved by the congress reaffirmed that such an alliance remains the long-term “strategic” objective of the Communists.

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Berlinguer emerged from the 14th Party Congress as the undisputed leader of the party, as evidenced by the important party structural changes he was able to effect: He reduced the membership of the Central Committee, the Cultural Commission and the Directorate but increased the Secretariat to accommodate his supporters. Most important of all, he abolished the Politburo, which had served as a source of political power for such former "party notables" as Giorgio Amendola and Pietro Ingrao and others of their generation. In addition, with an obvious lack of concern for Soviet sensibilities, Berlinguer removed Armando Cossutta, the PCI leader most esteemed by the Soviets, from the Secretariat.

The PCI effort to gain a share in the national government through an alliance with the dominant DC and the left-oriented Italian Socialist Party (PSI) may be hindered by recent events in Portugal: The Portuguese Government has banned Portugal's Christian Democratic Party from participating in the national elections, and anti-Communist forces in Italy are seeking to exploit this issue to its fullest extent. Amintore Fanfani, political secretary of the DC, who remains adamantly opposed to the historic compromise, ordered the DC delegation that attended the PCI Congress as observers to walk out in protest against Berlinguer's failure to condemn the Portuguese Communists' action against the Christian Democrats. Reaction from other Italian political leaders to the PCI historic compromise proposal has been primarily negative. Oddo Biasini, leader of the small but influential left-oriented Republican Party, called it "an idea not for the moment realistically feasible." Giovanni Maiagodi, head of the conservative Liberal Party, commented that the PCI aspired to enter the government "in order to institute the characteristic totalitarian regime" that exists in Russia and



Enrico Berlinguer Addresses 14th PCI Congress,
Rome, March 1975

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Portugal. The Social Democratic Party issued a document in which it labeled the proposal "a strategem of the Leninist brand."

The official Christian Democratic response, led by Fanfani, continues to be negative, but some prominent members of the DC, in the center as well as on the left, are privately persuaded that, eventually, they will have to come to terms with the Communists. At a DC national meeting in July 1974, Ciriaco De Mita, now Minister of Foreign Trade, went as far as to call for an undefined "accord" with the Communists. Others labeled the PCI "democratic" and argued that national sovereignty would not be "wounded" if the Communists entered the government. Other influential DC leaders—including Foreign Minister Mariano Rumor—apparently are in general agreement that there is no way for any Italian Government to function effectively without some form of input by the Communists.

Returns from the Italian regional elections of 15 June 1975 have revealed a decisive shift to the left, marked by unprecedented gains for the Communist Party. The PCI received 33.4 percent of the vote, compared to 35.3 percent for the Christian Democrats. The parties of the left—the Communists, the Socialists and a small party to the left of the Communists—obtained 46 percent of the vote. The election results represent the largest shift in Italian voting patterns since 1948; the left will interpret the vote as a call for a change. That was the common thread in the Socialists' and Communists' campaigns. The outcome does not constitutionally affect the comparative strength of the parties in the national legislature, but the election results will bring additional pressures for implementing Berlinguer's historic compromise proposal.* Both the Communists and the Socialists have until now opposed holding a national election before the scheduled 1977 date. Pressures for an early election will probably increase in both parties, however, in hopes of translating the regional gains to the national legislature.

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**For an evaluation of the impact of Communist participation in the national government, see NIE 24-1-74 Prospects for and Consequences of Increased Communist Influence in Italian Politics, 18 July 1974.*

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